

## **DISABILITIES ISSUES**

November 18, 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]*

[In these minutes: Metro Mobility Update; Update on Student Campus Experience Questions; Humphrey Association for Disability and Mental Illness; Disability Resource Center Update]

**PRESENT:** Chair Peggy Martin, Katherine Murphy, Donna Johnson, Kim Doberstein, Katy O'Brien, Andy Hillis, Betsy Kerr, Victoria Nelson, Maki Isaka, Lars Oddson, Anna Mosser

**REGRETS:** Michele Chilinski, Alison Oosterhuis

**ABSENT:** John De Haan, Perry Moriearty, Heather Peters, David Johnson, Jane Jones, Madison Wood, Libby Parker

**GUESTS:** Mallory Mitchell, president, Humphrey Association for Disability and Mental Illness

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** NONE

**1. Welcome and introductions** - Chair Peggy Martin opened the meeting via videoconference from the Rochester Campus and members introduced themselves. Since the next meeting is not until February 17<sup>th</sup>, Martin said her goal for the meeting is to bring closure to some issues and decide whether or not to continue examining others. Martin also asked members to prepare to introduce any new business they might have at the end of the meeting.

**2. Metro Mobility update** – Ms. Katherine Murphy reviewed that affordable and equitable access to Metro Mobility passes for disabled students was the issue pertinent the committee. She said she has been researching the difference in transportation services provided to disabled versus non-disabled students and the difference in service fees. The committee previously decided to speak directly to disabled students to hear first-hand how deeply they perceived this issue as a problem. Murphy reported that only one student purchased a Metro Mobility booklet this semester. Murphy questioned why only one student had purchased the ride passes and determined that work should continue because the committee did not yet have enough information to take a specific action. Martin said the Disability Student Cultural Center (DSCC) referred a disabled student who had experience with Metro Mobility and would be conducting an interview as soon as possible. Her findings will be reported back to the committee, Martin said.

**3. Update on student campus experience questions** - Martin reviewed that committee goals include seeking to understand the disabled student experience on campus. One way to accomplish this is through inviting student groups involved in disability issues to committee meetings. In the previous meeting, Ms. Katy O'Brien and Mx. Andy Hillis volunteered to identify a set of standardized questions to ask student groups in an effort to assist the committee in gaining a comprehensive picture of the disabled student experience. O'Brien provided copies

of the draft questions to members. O'Brien noted that the table included in the report is from a national database describing primary student disability categories. O'Brien and Hillis said they found themselves focusing questions on physical disabilities and felt the table was a nice reminder to expand their scope to include mental illness.

O'Brien said questions were broken into the categories of:

- Studying and coursework
- Physical access
- Mental health
- Attitudes and knowledge
- Resources and education

Hillis said one challenge was a lack of knowledge regarding the layout of system campuses. It is hard to ask questions about campuses the committee is unfamiliar with. Input from system campuses would be helpful to create a comprehensive questionnaire, Hillis said.

Mr. Lars Oddsson asked if the question about a need for additional financial counseling, listed under the Resources and Education section, referred to student access to grants, scholarships, or general financial support. O'Brien responded that they were keeping questions general and were open to modifications and suggestions. Their intention with that question was to ask if disabled students have proper access to financial support resources. She said the goal is to identify areas where the University is doing well in addition to areas the committee can offer assistance towards improvement. Members discussed the intended audience of the questionnaire. It was suggested the person in charge of stakeholder groups, such as the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and the DSCC and not the students themselves, could provide responses. Martin said the committee has yet to define details of the questionnaire process, such as who to ask to provide responses. Information can be gained through interviews, as will be done later in the meeting with the Humphrey Association for Disability and Mental Illness (HADMI). She said another option is to send out paper questionnaire to disabled students.

Ms. Mallory Mitchell asked if the questionnaire would go to students or to advisors of student groups. Martin responded that the initial idea was to create a standard set of questions for the committee's use when communicating with various stakeholders across campus to keep uniformity in how questions were asked and the information was received. Mitchell said some advisors are more active with student groups than others and responses will differ based on their level of engagement. Responses directly from disabled students will also differ between the undergraduate and graduate level, she said. She gave the example that Humphrey students stay in the Humphrey building, which could skew questions about building accessibility.

Martin said it would be nice to get data from the campus climate survey because the data comes directly from students with disabilities. However, she said, the data is not available, but it would give a metric to measure against so the committee could determine if it was satisfied with resources and services available to students. Johnson said Student Engagement Research Universities (SERU) performed a poll of students with disabilities and that data would be available to the committee. Ron Husmann is the administrator of the poll and Martin will contact him.

Johnson said she saw a connection to campus climate work the University is performing and data the committee is looking to gather and asked how members felt about tying the two together. She said the committee should be clear about what it is really asking for and then consider what the next steps of action would be. She said the climate of the University for disabled students includes the fact that, nationwide, 15% of university students have a mental illness while 49% of students on the Twin Cities campus have some form of mental illness. Alternative learning programs at the University serve 8% of students compared to 31% nationally. She said Boynton Health Services would be releasing information regarding this issue soon. She said DRC is busier than it has ever been and Boynton has a long waitlist of students requesting services. Even with additions to staff, neither Boynton nor DRC can keep up with demands for their services. She asked in terms of being ready to service incoming students, how the committee could use the University's campus climate work to leverage the creation of a welcoming, inclusive climate for all students?

Martin asked the committee what the next steps should be with the questionnaire. O'Brien asked if members would like to put the questionnaire on hold while she works with Hillis to gather more data or if the preference was to use it within the committee to keep incoming information uniform. Another option, she said, was to format the information into survey form and send it directly to students with disabilities. Hillis liked the idea of looking into the campus climate work being performed in conjunction with the questions. Hillis would like to split undergraduates from graduates if the committee decides to conduct a survey and said the committee was at a good starting point, but more work needs to be done with question development. Hillis and O'Brien will look at the campus climate data in their continued research.

Martin wrapped up the discussion by saying the questionnaire will be used internally for now. The focus of the committee is the experience of disabled students, faculty, and staff on campus. She reminded members to consider aging workforce related critical issues facing the University. She said the committee should be thinking of how to partner with other surveys and data being gathered on campus. Hillis and O'Brien will also draft issue specific questions for specific audiences as well as general questions.

**4. Humphrey Association for Disability and Mental Illness (HADMI)** - Mitchell said HADMI is in its third year with the past two years focused on establishing and creating its organizational structure. This year's focus is programing and defining group goals. She said the group holds events focused on mental illness, the most popular being "HHH Day." Hugs, High Fives, and Handshakes Day welcomes people into the student lounge for a hug, high five, or handshake with a sticker and candy. Mitchell said HADMI is partnering with the Carlson Business Board Undergraduate Association, the School of Public Health Graduate School, and the University Student Senate to hold a Mindfulness Workshop in February 2016 to teach stress management techniques.

Mitchell said HADMI addresses issues as a need is seen or students communicate that there is a need for action. When Humphrey students began to struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder, HADMI provided a therapy light to the wellness room. Mitchell said that reservations are

possible but not necessary to access the space. The room provides a place for decompressing through providing a place to rest through the use of reclining chairs, yoga mats, therapy light use, coloring books, and other stress relieving tools. The wellness room is located on the first floor in room 188 and anyone can access it with a key that is checked out at the front desk. The goal is to encourage proper stress management and anxiety relief, she said. Murphy said she is an advisor at Humphrey and the wellness room has existed for several years. It began as a joint effort between faculty and staff, designed specifically for individuals with traumatic brain injuries. She said the setting has a homey feel and is intentionally away from distraction. Murphy explained Humphrey only provides graduate programs, which are typically two years in duration. This has created an ongoing issue of constant student turnover, making it hard to establish consistency of student awareness and use. Murphy said HADMI was founded in response to a student suicide. Mitchell added that she is seeing an increase in demand from students for the sort of work the committee is doing as well as access to safe spaces like the wellness room. She said the Carlson School is using Humphrey's wellness room as a model for their own space.

Professor Betsy Kerr asked Mitchell to explain more about HADMI's membership. Mitchell responded that the board consists of five Humphrey students: one president, one secretary, one treasurer, and two student representatives. The board meets a few days before general body meeting, which takes place once a month. There is no formal membership and all Humphrey students are welcome to attend the general body meeting. Mitchell said the board attends all general meetings and typically five or so other people attend. Their biggest struggle is scheduling meetings around class conflicts. Meetings are held in the wellness room as a way to encourage people to find the space for future use, as well as providing a comfortable space to talk about uncomfortable issues. The HADMI advisor is Michele Chilinski and she attends every meeting, Mitchell said.

Mitchell said HADMI is looking for ways to reach out into the community. They participated in a walk for suicide prevention at the Mall of America and raised about \$600. Mitchell explained HADMI's main mission is to reduce stigma around mental health issues and raise awareness both inside and outside the classroom. HADMI also focuses on the creation of safe spaces where people can acknowledge their feelings.

Mitchell walked through the questionnaire. She said needs for HADMI include tools to effectively coordinate with faculty. She said while there is a clause in each syllabus for mental health awareness, not all faculty understand student needs for extra time or space. She said there have been instances of professors using insensitive language and HADMI is having a difficult time engaging in effective conversations with faculty about these issues. Ms. Anna Mosser said she attended a recent mental health forum and faculty guidance on how to approach students with mental illness was discussed and identified as a need on campus. Johnson said campus-training sessions on mental health have been revised. They are 1.5 hours long, which makes attendance for many faculty members difficult. Johnson said the most recent forum suggested pairing a liaison with each department and college to talk through how to address mental health issues with faculty and staff. Liaisons are not counselors but can assist staff and faculty with appropriate words to use and resources to access. Johnson discussed the creation of a resource card as an example of how a liaison might share information with departments and colleges. The

resource cards are small, laminated, and list various contact numbers for someone to call when in crisis. She shared contact information for COPE. COPE operates through Hennepin County and by calling 911 COPE will come onsite to assist with a crisis. Boynton has contracted with Crisis Connection to add staffing and a phone line. Mitchell said that HADMI compiled a large resource guide located in the student commons area, and would explore how to make it accessible to faculty and staff. Mitchell said she would like to provide a sheet to faculty and staff outlining when high anxiety times are approaching, such as finals and holidays.

Martin asked members for their thoughts and responses to the discussion so far. Nelson said she supports sending a letter in support of both creating liaisons to departments and colleges and the creation of a resource card for crisis moments to the provost committee. O'Brien said promoting the training already available is important. Mosser said it is possible the Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health is working on this issue, as it was a topic at the forum. Johnson said many committees must collaborate on such a large issue. She felt this tied into the campus climate goals of "how to change something that needs to be changed; and how does that happen together?" Johnson said the committee could work on building momentum in support of participation in upcoming forums and trainings. Martin said she would work with Johnson before the next meeting to strategize internal communication with the Provost's committee to affirm the committee's support of this topic.

**5. Old business** – Members reviewed the committee goals shared online after the previous meeting to ensure they were articulated appropriately. Martin said there were three meetings left in the year and achieving all the committee goals in that time frame is not possible. The goal for the last meeting of this year in March 2016 is to know where committee work stands with each goal. Martin said assigning work during the summer break is a possibility so progress does not stall.

Professor Maki Isaka said assisting the DRC in finding adequate testing space was listed as a goal. She asked about how the committee could solicit help from various colleges and departments around campus to provide space. Johnson said every year the DRC sees an increase in the number of accommodated tests they provide. She said 4,000 tests were administered two years ago and 6,000 were administered last year. The DRC rents space in the McNamara Center and need is outgrowing that space. They are considering renting space in the Commons Hotel and the DQ Room of TCF Bank Stadium. The creation of a University student-testing center is needed but highly unlikely because of space restrictions and cost, Johnson said. She said DRC is working with Classroom and Space Planning to see if any space could be considered swing space, making it available during finals and midterms. CLA students represent the highest portion of DRC registrants but science and engineering students represent the highest number of those needing testing accommodations. She said this means that testing site locations need to be considered.

**5. Disability Resource Center update** – Johnson said she is working with Scott Marshall and Peter Radcliff to gather data by December regarding graduation and retention rates for students with disabilities and students not registered with the DRC. Once the data analysis is complete, Martin would like it presented at a meeting.

Johnson said the DRC is reorganizing its Faculty Advisory Committee. Previous faculty participants and students with disabilities will be invited to join the committee. The focus of the committee will be on student access. Johnson said the committee has been very hands-on in the past and the expectation of participants is that they continue to be very involved with meeting committee goals.

Johnson reviewed the mental health forum held on October 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 pm – 8:00 pm and said faculty members were not as well represented, as the DRC would have liked. She said DRC is busy serving students, faculty, and staff. The number of students registered with the DRC keep growing and intakes are occurring later into the semester. She said this trend will continue and issues will play out in the classroom, which is why working with faculty to understand mental health is vital. DRC staff is working on helping people see disability as a part of diversity, she said.

Hearing no further business, the committee adjourned.

Avonna Starck  
University Senate