

Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC)
December 8, 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: Updates from SSCC Members; Office for Conflict Resolution; University Dining Services/Aramark; Coffman Union Space Proposal]

PRESENT: Trish Palermo (chair) Mark Kanake, Runsheng Ma, Jonathan Borowsky, Taylor Cronen, Patrick English, John Freude, Maddie Schwartz, Noelle Sjoquist, Fanda Yang

REGRETS: Lauren Mitchell, Zane Bloom, Katie Ledermann

ABSENT: None.

GUESTS: Julie Showers, director, Office for Conflict Resolution; Karen DeVet, director, University Dining Services (UDS); Amy Keran, interim contract administrator and director, U Card Office

OTHERS: Nicholas Goldsmith, COGS; Adam Lehr, UDS; Chris Elrod, UDS, Vickie Courtney, University Senate Office; Becky Hippert, University Senate Office

1. Updates from SSCC members - Chair Trish Palermo welcomed the committee and asked members to give a brief update on what they were working on in their groups. Patrick English said that Minnesota Student Association (MSA) President Abeer Syedah recently gave the State of the Campus address, and that MSA was currently planning for their spring campaigns. Maddie Schwartz said that as at-large representative to the Student Senate, she was working on getting senators interested in meeting with their deans in the spring to give updates about their work. Jonathan Borowsky said that the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) is working on a resolution on student mental health services. Other members had no updates.

2. Office for Conflict Resolution - Palermo introduced Julie Showers, director, Office for Conflict Resolution (OCR). Showers began with an overview of OCR, noting that OCR serves faculty, students, and non-bargaining unit staff at the University. OCR oversees the official grievance process, which is tried before a three person panel with the provost making the final decision. All visits to OCR are confidential and impartial; in fact, Showers said that she prefers the term “multi-partial,” which provides opportunities for both sides to be heard. Showers said that approximately 20% of her time is spent on formal grievances. The other 80% of her time is spent on consultation, brainstorming, and skill building around conflict. In the last academic year, she worked with approximately 65 faculty, 65 P&A staff, and 17 undergraduate or graduate student workers.

Showers said that her approach to conflict resolution is unique, since she was trained not in higher education, but in law. She added that many people are not eager to deal with conflict, and

may avoid dealing with serious issues. In these cases, the institution pays a price for not dealing with conflict. She clarified that there is no policy on bad management; in the cases where there is not a clear policy violation, but issues with management, the goal of OCR would be to mitigate the impact on the person reporting the issue and on the institution.

Showers went on to explain that students are currently the smallest group utilizing OCR's services, and that many students may not know about the office. John Freude asked if part of the reason students may not seek out conflict resolution services is fear from graduate researchers that it may damage their careers or their relationship with their advisor, since this relationship lasts many years. Showers responded that there is a Student Conflict Resolution Center, headed by Jan Morse, which serves graduate students almost exclusively. Since graduate students are one of the most vulnerable populations, Morse has primary jurisdiction in this area.

Showers went on to discuss retaliation; students, faculty, and staff often fear retaliation. She said that visits to the office are confidential, and that OCR does not move forward with issues without approval from the person reporting the issue. OCR can help a student to develop techniques to better address an advisor with whom they are having an issue. There are other avenues as well for students, for example, changing advisors. She stressed that University policy protects faculty, staff, and students from retaliation.

Palermo asked if OCR was available to all students on all campuses, and if so, how students on system campuses could access their services. Showers confirmed that yes, OCR is a system-wide office, and that students on system campuses wishing to utilize OCR's services should call or email the office. She said that when there is enough interest, she will travel to system campuses by request, and added that she is coming to Crookston on February 20th, 2017, for a professional staff development day, for example.

Freude asked if there was a mental health focus to the work of OCR, and if OCR has partnered with other groups on this issue. Showers replied that OCR has worked with Matt Hanson in the past on this issue, and that it is a good idea for the office to become more aware of public events, and think more about how to partner with other groups. Jonathan Borowsky asked if OCR was staffed adequately to offer and promote their services. Showers responded that since the staff in OCR is very small, resources are overwhelmed. She said that she would like to be able to provide strategic guidance to the University as well as direct services, but that right now offerings are weighted towards direct services.

3. University Dining Services/Aramark: Palermo introduced Karen DeVet, director, University Dining Services, and Amy Keran, interim contract administrator and director, U Card Office, to discuss University Dining Services and their contract with Aramark. DeVet began by introducing two additional presenters, Adam Lehr and Chris Elrod, who along with DeVet are employees of Aramark, while Keran is a University employee. DeVet began with an overview of the current UDS initiatives, including improvement of food options on the St. Paul campus, where they have heard concerns of lack of food options and variety. UDS will be focusing communications to those in St. Paul to provide them with other locations to go to, such as Bailey Hall. DeVet said that she is currently working with Keran on capitol investment projects, such as the renovation of the Terrace; currently, they are considering modest proposals for the space. DeVet added that she

and Keran are looking at locations on Upper Buford in St. Paul to offer more grab-and-go items for faculty, staff, and students. Flexible options are very popular on other campuses, DeVet said, including take-away from dining halls, and so this will likely be expanded. Palermo asked what the timeline was for these improvements to the St. Paul campus. DeVet said that currently, they are still looking at potential vendors. On the other campuses, DeVet added, a Pioneer Hall renovation will include a single dining site solution for the Super Block.

Palermo said that she understood DeVet had recently been in discussions with MSA, and asked what the substance of those conversations had been. DeVet said that they discussed the Food Recovery Program, where unused food was collected and donated to urban ventures, food for those with special diets, and expanding dining hall hours during finals week. DeVet said that Bailey and Middlebrook Halls will now be open until midnight during finals week, and Centennial Hall will be open on Friday and Saturday. She added that for special diets, UDS had a dietician that is available to help students navigate the dining hall offerings. There were approximately 60 students assisted last year, with 45% of those students requiring gluten-free options, and one person requesting kosher/halal offerings. When trying to provide services for those on special diets, she said, UDS tries to serve the greatest number, and so kosher and halal offerings are currently not a priority based on need. Palermo asked how the availability of the UDS dietician was communicated to students. DeVet said the dietician option was promoted via Facebook, Twitter, University Housing, and was presented to the Community Advisors in the residence halls.

DeVet went on to explain that student satisfaction with UDS offerings is measured in several ways. First, UDS conducts a fall "Dining Style" survey which measures food quality, service, options, etc.; DeVet said that UDS' scores were up this year, with students rating UDS at 5.25 out of 7, with a high sample size. Additionally, DeVet said there is a mobile app that allows students to give direct feedback. She stressed that using this app or contacting UDS via phone or email is the best way to provide direct feedback to UDS; UDS does not have access to closed Facebook groups and that forum does not allow UDS to deal with student concerns effectively. Palermo asked DeVet to speak more about the student satisfaction survey, and asked if the results of that survey were provided to the public. DeVet replied that currently, the results are shared directly with the University and are not public.

Palermo asked DeVet to speak on the reasoning for the meal plan requirement for students living in residence halls. DeVet said that UDS is a self-funded unit, and that it would not be sustainable if students did not enroll in the meal plans; therefore, the University made the decision to make meal plans mandatory in certain residence halls, and not in others.

Palermo asked about the UDS committee, and how students could be placed on the committee. As time for this agenda item had run out, Palermo advised that she would collect questions from other SSCC members and send to DeVet via email for a response.

4. Coffman Union space proposal - Fanda Yang, vice chair, SSCC, presented an organizational chart of the SSCC and the Student Senate for discussion and approval. Yang said that this organizational chart would be used in a proposal to request space for the Student Senate in Coffman Memorial Union, if approved by the committee. Borowsky suggested that all student

groups should be the same color on the chart, as it is not necessary to differentiate between campuses. Also, Borowsky said that the college boards noted in the chart are typically undergraduate-specific groups; while this is part of the charge in the handbook, it is not always applicable for graduate students. English suggested making the college boards box smaller, and adding “if applicable,” to mitigate this concern.

Moving to the space proposal, Yang invited members to comment on his proposal to request a Student Senate space in Coffman 202. English said that he did not understand why this would be needed, since all members of the Student Senate are already members of their respective student government groups, and therefore have access to Coffman 202. Senators can reserve the back office to meet, English added, and since the Student Senate is technically housed under a department and is not a student group, it should not be given space in Coffman.

As time had run out for this agenda item, Palermo said that she would collect comments from SSCC members via email and put this agenda item to an email vote.

5. Other business - Palermo asked the committee if there was any other business. Goldsmith said that he had an issue recently and would like to discuss it with SSCC members. Recent work on the Student Service Fee Task Force, Goldsmith said, presented several issues with groups working on the same issues, and the lack of communication between those groups. Listening sessions on student fees were requested and staffed by students, with no administrators, and the work of the committee was largely secretive (many meetings were not open to the public), leading to concerns regarding misrepresentation, and setting off some rumors about the work of the group. Goldsmith said that these types of issues make consultation between groups very difficult, and that there is a concern that lines may be crossed with administrators.

As time had run out for this agenda item, Palermo said that if Goldsmith had questions for the group, or if the group had questions for Goldsmith, the discussion could continue via email.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Barbara Irish
University Senate Office