

THE STATESMAN

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2013

Your UMD Student Association Get to know the faces of your student government

BY KIM HYATT
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UMD's student leaders are dedicating downtime many would use to binge on Netflix or BuzzFeed Top 20s to create a better campus climate for students both now and in the future.

"As the official voice of the student body, we are here to listen to comments or complaints about the campus and work to improve them," said Kimberly Newton, president of UMD's Student Association (SA). "We are the connection and liaison to administration. There is a lot we can do for students as their student government and we are always willing to help."

To give a better idea of what SA does for UMD's students, Newton spoke about the importance of student government and gave an overview of her involvement, while encouraging other students to do the same.

What are your responsibilities as SA President?

Newton: I am responsible for all of Student Association, which includes a Cabinet, Board of Directors, Representatives At-Large and Senators from all of the respective collegiate units. I am also responsible for meeting with faculty and staff and representing UMD at different events, meetings, and committees.

What does SA do for the university and its students?



SARAH STARK/STATESMAN

Front Row: Cody Reilly, Kimberly Newton, Hannah Osterheim, Chelsea Cansino, Ryan Gormley Middle Row: Sarah Stark, Benjamin Dufault, Angelina Costrino, Mia Johnson, Brittany Nystrom, Corbin Smyth Back Row: Trevor Hofkes, Brandon Breuer, Matthew Weber, Frank Farleo, Carson Giller, Ross Cody Burns Not Pictured: Jordan Schnaidt, Hannah Keil

Newton: We distribute money through the Fund Allocation Committee to numerous student groups and also offer the Bulldog Taxi Program. We also help facilitate

changes across the UMD campus.

Why is student government important?

Newton: Student government is important because we provide a voice

for students. It is also vital that there are students representing the student body on important campus decisions, issue, and projects.

see STUDENT ASSOCIATION, A3

Law grants immunity to underage drinkers in trouble



SARAH STARK/STATESMAN

Minnesota's Medical Amnesty Law, a new law granting limited legal immunity to underage drinkers, was put into effect in August 2013.

BY GRAHAM HAKALA
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With the dawning of a new semester comes the inevitable return of underage college students looking for kicks at the bottom of flavored vodka bottles. As the parties get bigger, so do the risks of stumbling across an alcohol-related medical emergency. Thanks to a new state law, underage drinkers will not have to fear a ticket if they need to call the police for help.

The law grants underage drinkers limited legal immunity from a citation as long as they cooperate with police and medical personnel. Medical Amnesty for minors became a law in Minnesota earlier this year, after members of the Minnesota Student Association pushed for the bill in hopes of avoiding any potential harm

to those too afraid to call the police.

If an emergency arises, the law states that the caller must stay on the scene and wait for medical personnel to arrive. As long as the individual is cooperative, they will not receive an underage consumption ticket. The law does not protect minors against any other crimes.

Minnesota is the 14th state to institute a law like this. UMD has already been experimenting with this practice over the past few years.

"We've had an advantage that a lot of other states and colleges across the country haven't had," explained UMD health educator Lauretta Perry. "We've already been working with our campus and city police, and we had a protocol in place that is nearly identical to the law. Not a lot changes here."

In the past, the UMD Police Department (UMDPD) would use their discretion when dealing with alcohol-related emergencies. According to the UMDPD, the majority of these cases did not end in a citation.

"We never want to deter students from doing the right thing," said Sgt. Sean Huls of the UMDPD.

"Our number one concern is always public safety and making sure that anybody in any kind of medical distress gets the treatment they need."

Perry has done extensive research on the subject of medical amnesty for minors. According to her research, fear of legal punishment was second on the list of reasons why young people don't call for help.

see UNDERAGE, A3

Advantages of student organizations

BY KIM HYATT
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Being a student at UMD comes first, but finding your place outside the classroom can also help pave the way to graduation.

"It's shown that those who are involved are actually happier and do better at school than those who are not," said UMD's Senior Student Activity Adviser Christina Geissler. "Those who are involved are less anxious, less stressed, have better GPAs, better self-esteem . . . They just feel better by being connected and being involved."

There are over 250 student organizations on campus, all providing a fun and unique way for students to feel connected to their university. According to Geissler, there are many reasons to join a student group while studying at UMD:

Develop leadership, management and organizational skills

Network ("Almost every major has a club attached to it," Geissler said.)

Build your résumé

Be social ("Enjoy being with other people who believe or like the same things you do," she said.)

Achieve academic success

A study done by the Office of Institutional Research at the University of California Sacramento (SSU) found "a very positive impact on the academic performance of students at Sacramento State" for those involved in a club or organization. The graduation rates for such participants were nearly double that of non-

participants, according to researchers Jing Wang and Jonathan Shiveley.

So, there's no harm in joining a student organization. However, some groups may have some associated risk, Geissler said. For example: the Rugby Football Club or Endurance, a group dedicated to "testing the limits of their mind, body, and spirit," according to the group's website. Endurance members "like to do a long outing either Saturday or Sunday morning. For example: 3-5 hour run on the Superior Hiking Trail up North."

One of the many student organizations on campus is the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG). This group is dedicated to working on issues in social justice, corporate accountability and higher education, according to Samantha Bisogno, a senior at UMD who sits on MPIRG's board of directors. Bisogno said that MPIRG has made a lot of big changes in the area, like passing an initiative to have BPA-free water bottles on campus and helping preserve the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) by passing the nation's first "paddle-only" act.

"It's a great way to get experience and learn how to articulate your convictions and how to actually make a difference," Bisogno said. "Instead of just feeling a certain way about an issue, you can actually make changes in your community and in the state, even nationwide."

see ORGANIZATIONS, A3