

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**Friday, March 15, 2019
11:30 AM-1:00 PM
Great Lakes North – Palmer Commons**

Present: Selena Bazzi, Judith Beck, Gina Cervetti, Mariah Fiumara, Royster Harper, Charlie Koopmann, Cindy Leung, David Potter, Olga Virakhovskaya

Absent: Anton Avancena, Jill Esau, Kyriaki Marti, Yolanda Marti, Jairam Menon, Maribel Okiye, Chitra Subramanian, Simone Himbeault Taylor

Guest(s):

- *Jack Bernard*, Associate General Counsel - former chair of U-M Council for Disability Concerns and Office of the General Counsel
- *Ethriam Cash Brammer*, Assistant Dean & DEI Implementation Lead – Rackham School of Graduate Studies
- *Jeffrey Edelstein*, Graduate Research Assistant / School of Education Alum
- *Rob Ernst*, Associate Vice President for Student Life
- *Fred Kellam*, Interim Director - Services for Students with Disabilities
- *Tom Lehker*, Ombudsperson, Office of the Ombuds
- *Megan Marshall*, Coordinator of Services for Students with Chronic Health Conditions, Visual, and Mobility Impairments - Services for Students with Disabilities
- *Sonia Raheja*, Program Manager-Disability Issues - Office of the Provost
- *Mary Reilly*, Accessible Media Advisor - Services for Students with Disabilities
- *Stephanie Rosen*, Chair of U-M Council for Disability Concerns and Accessibility Specialist for M|Library

1. Call to Order

Chair Gina Cervetti welcomed the committee and asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda. No changes were suggested.

2. Review / Approval of Minutes

A quorum was not present at the beginning of the meeting so Chair Cervetti opted to move the review and approval of the minutes to the end of the meeting. Note: The approval did not take place so this item will be added to the agenda for the April meeting.

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

3. Presentation on Priority Registration and Annual Report for Services for Students with Disabilities

Fred Kellam, Interim Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), addressed the committee by thanking everyone for their support in his role as Interim Director, and introduced two of his colleagues, Mary Reilly, Accessible Media Advisor for SSD, and Megan Marshall, Coordinator of Services for Students with Chronic Health Conditions, Visual, and Mobility Impairments. He began his presentation by bringing attention to an article in the University Record stating that U-M is ranked as the best disability friendly university in the United States (<https://record.umich.edu/articles/u-m-ranked-best-disability-friendly-university-us>).

Kellam reviewed the materials sent to the committee prior to the meeting beginning with the Categories of Priority Registration, then Priority Registration in the Big 10 and Priority Registration in Non-Big 10 Universities respectively. He also briefly referred to the Annual Report for 2018.

Reilly noted in July of 2018, 2,821 students registered with SSD, and the office registered 899 new students that year alone. For the first 9 months of Fiscal Year 2019, 2,875 students registered with SSD, having registered 1,001 new students thus far. The increase in registered students to the office shows that students are definitely self-identifying and seeking accommodations.

Marshall expressed that the three biggest disability populations are those with chronic health issues, psychological disabilities, and/or mobility impairment. When students contact the SSD office and register their disability, Marshall performs an individualized assessment of each student and incorporates documentation provided by the individuals, parents, and medical professionals. She then discusses reasonable and appropriate accommodations with the student to determine what they prefer/require. Marshall noted an example where SSD would advocate for priority registration – chemotherapy treatments. She did note that approval for priority registration does not constitute continued eligibility; every student is individualistic.

Q&A throughout the presentation/discussion:

- What is the percentage of students that receive priority registration?
 - 5% of undergrads receive priority registration while 15% of grad students do, encompassing all priority registration categories at U-M.
- When applying to U-M, is there a section that asks if they have a disability?
 - No, the student will need to come to the SSD office and self-identify.

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

- Has there ever been an issue with not being able to provide priority registration to a student?
 - It is very rare for there to be a situation where someone has a documented need and there are problems with providing priority registration.
- Is there a documented number of those not reporting their disability?
 - There is a significant number of students not coming into the office to self-identify. SSD receives documentation from parents but unless the student comes in to obtain assistance, SSD cannot do anything.
- Why would a student not register their disability?
 - There is a lot of stigma attached to having a disability. Many students have mixed feelings about identifying themselves in this manner.
 - There is some misconception about the SSD office being able to help. Students think SSD can only help xyz student, not them. They do not realize that assistance is provided based on individual need.
 - Graduate students fear not being respected by students if they identify as being an instructor with a disability.
- What does a student need to do to register with SSD? How easy do we make it for students to identify themselves?
 - Students can call or email SSD.
 - The website outlines the steps to register a disability.
 - SSD works closely with U-M units and community providers to market their services and advocate.
- Is caregiving a disability?
 - Disability is defined as an impairment that affects a major life activity. Caregiving is a life circumstance, not a disability. In this case, SSD would be unable to help the student in the way that they need. Other offices can help in this instance, such as Counseling and Psychological Services or the Dean of Students office.
- Will the college entrance exam scams make students with real issues less willing to identify?
 - Kellam does not see this as an issue as most people that come to SSD have well documented and often long-standing disability issues.
 - Dr. Rob Ernst, Associate Vice President for Student Life and Executive Director of University Health Service, mentioned that SSD will not be scrutinizing registrants and looking for scammers.
- Are students permitted to work at the front desk of SSD?
 - Students have been in this role for a long time but SSD is currently hiring for a permanent receptionist.

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

- Does SSD have enough funding to meet its needs?
 - Ernst expressed that it is fair to say that there is a positive relationship between SSD and the Office of the Provost when it comes to supporting individual needs. When a need requires transformation of an environment, the relationship has been great. When it comes to day-to-day challenges, he is working to address some challenges.
 - Vice President Royster Harper stated that for the last 15+ year, the Office of the Provost has given Student Life what it needs to assist students. Every year, SSD provides information as to what accommodations the students require and what it will cost, and the Provost pays the bill. This funding does not show up in the SSD budget.
 - It is very important to note that the University does not make admissions decisions based on its ability to pay for accommodations. While some accommodations are very expensive (CART costs \$40,000 per semester per student that needs the accommodation), the University will pay regardless of the expense.
- What are the requirements of professors to accept student accommodations?
 - Professors are legally mandated to accept accommodations and do not have the right to refuse to do so.
 - If a student feels that a professor is in violation of this, the student can speak with the Office for Institutional Equity.
 - There is a real gap in awareness among faculty on campus. There has been failure to reach faculty that decide they do not want to learn about how to support students' accommodations.
 - Nationally, there is a bit of a trend of institutions branding themselves as advocates and not just a provider of services, in order to combat this issue. SSD is an advocate for students and the office is continuing to work with faculty to educate them on disabilities and accommodations.
- Does SSD work with students regarding test accommodations, longer lab hours, etc.?
 - It comes down to what is a reasonable accommodation and what is legally mandated.
 - Can utilize professors' discretion and determine what the essential components of a class are; some things are not mandated. There is room for negotiation, however.
- How can we take this information to our own academic and administrative unites to create cross talk, support the DEI Plan, etc.
 - Work with the Faculty Senate office to incorporate disability accommodation language on syllabi.
 - Faculty Senate currently has language but faculty can choose whether to use it.

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

- Advocate for education at new faculty orientations.
- Indicate that students can take action.

Comments/Suggestions:

- Number 4 in the key for the Priority Registration document provided by SSD should not refer only to athletes. Koopman suggested that it be changed to reflect all those that represent U-M in sponsored activities, e.g., solar car, band, etc.
- 48% of students requiring assistance feel discriminated against, yet disability is a very small piece in the DEI plan.
- Possibly utilize the services of students who have received SSD assistance and have great respect for the office, to promote the services with the goal of breaking the stigma some students have about self-identifying.
- Jack Bernard, Associate General Counsel, exclaimed that there are plenty of accommodation options for grad/law students. Single best thing the University can do is have a sentence or two, along with the accessibility logo, in admissions letters that provides info about SSD so that students can get what they need as with enough time to advocate for themselves.

4. Adjournment

Fiumara made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bazzi seconded. All in favor.