BSU-FA Faculty with Disabilities Caucus

Information Sheet

Who we are?
The Faculty with Disabilities Caucus is a special interest group, within the BSU-FA, comprised of faculty that hold shared experiences in disability and solidarity concerning disability-relevant issues at Bemidji State University.

What we do?
In this caucus, we come from across a range of impairment experiences (e.g., physical, psychological, sensory, chronic illness, developmental, etc.) to educate, advocate, and empower. First, we are here to raise awareness about the distinct obstacles and constraints we face as faculty with disabilities. Second, we are advocates for equity measures that can empower current and future BSU stakeholders, especially future faculty, who share the experience of disability.

Lastly, this caucus provides a service to the BSU-FA more generally, in the sense that it provides support and consultation to members who may acquire disability, due to the onset of a medical condition or due to the change of work context. We hope to empower our fellow faculty to pursue accommodations with peace-of-mind by providing appropriate information, walking through possible options in advance, and offering to be present in the accommodations process, if so requested.

Who is included in this caucus?
The Faculty with Disability Caucus is comprised of faculty who identify themselves as having a disability. We define disability consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) as a person who has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, is regarded as having such an impairment. Persons with disabilities represents a range of possible impairments and we tend to take a “big tent” approach and are not looking to bar anyone from taking part, if they share in our mission and concerns.

We appreciate that identifying oneself in such a way continues to be met with social risk and stigma and is itself a courageous act. It is the subject of our advocacy that disability grow as a more normalized, so persons do not need to experience shame or stigma for experiences that are inherently human. Even so, we will never ask for you to self-disclose your specific impairment-condition, with the understanding that we come together with the understanding of solidarity and shared experience of being faculty with disabilities. Our meetings and our list of members is kept private and is not shared with the BSU-FA leadership to ensure a safe space.
How is this caucus structured?

As a special interest group, the faculty with disabilities caucus, provides an open forum to discuss issues as equals. As part of the caucus structure within the BSU-FA, the disabilities caucus members elect a senator as a voting representative of their issues, concerns, and priorities at BSU-FA meetings. Likewise, they elect a representative to the IFO Disability Advocacy Committee. The terms of BSU-FA senator and DAC representative are two years. The disabilities caucus also selects an alternative who will attend BSU-FA meetings and the DAC meetings when the elected representative is unable to attend.